Ojamajo Propane: The Series

Episode 4: Strickland-Sittin'

While the town of MisArlen was commonly thought to be populated entirely by Texans, tourists were only thinking about the rural sections, the sections of Texas, to be precise. What they didn't know was that there was another section, sections where Japan had merged with America, to an extent. If one moved away from the beer-drinking, propane filled air of the Texas side, the Japan side was a rich, bustling city, filled entirely with Japanese people, whose tech was entirely ahead of the Texans. This was also the homeground of the witches, the town of Misora.

Anyways, resting within Misora, which had merged with Arlen, was a great mansion, a huge one, belonging to the wealthy Fujiwaras, led by the famous movie director, Akira, the prolific fashion designer, Reiko, the ever-so-stalwart nanny, Baaya, and their only child, their daughter, Hazuki, who was one of the Ojamajos. Anyways, the Fujiwaras were within the throes of chaos, with all of them yelling at each other in some sort of spectacular way, whereas Hazuki was covering her ears and cowering in the corner.

"No, No, NO!" yelled Akira, over the phone. "This movie has to be perfect! I repeat, PERFECT! You can't just throw a propane salesman in a story about witches! It just doesn't make any sense!"

"I just need to be there for this knitting class! Please! Please! Please! Don't delay it!" yelled Reiko, also over the phone, to her knitting class instructor. "I've got a really high-class dress that I just need to complete in time for the next fashion show!"

Baaya, the ever-patient nanny, stood between them, her arms crossed and an eyebrow raised. "Can't you two see you're scaring Hazuki? We need to calm down and think rationally!" She glanced over at Hazuki, who was still huddled in the corner, her eyes wide.

Akira and Reiko took deep breaths. "Okay, so I need to be there for this knitting class, I can walk there before it closes." said Reiko.

"And I could talk to the director of my movie before anything gets changed." said Akira. "Thing is, there's a problem."

They both looked at each other.

"Who will babysit Hazuki?!"

"Even worse, I'm takin' my first vacation in 40 years!" replied Baaya.

Akira and Reiko blinked in horror.

"Your *first* vacation in forty years?" Akira asked, as if the very idea offended him.

"That's right," Baaya said, adjusting her coat. "And I *fully* intend to enjoy it."

And with that, the Fujiwaras' stalwart, long-suffering nanny strutted out the door, leaving a rich couple *utterly unprepared* for handling their own child.

Reiko gasped dramatically. "Akira, what are we *going* to do?!"

"We need a babysitter," Akira muttered.

And so, after an ad was placed, fate—or rather, the worst decision of their lives—arrived at their doorstep.

Meanwhile, at Strickland Propane, Hank Hill was eating lunch with his workmate, Joe Jack, after a long shift of selling propane grills. He looked around the room. Something was odd. The announcement tannoy had not sounded, and Buck Strickland, Hank's boss, was supposed to be organising a meeting about Strickland Propane's weekly sales.

"Has anyone seen Buck?" asked Hank. "He was supposed to be here forty minutes ago."

"Maybe he's pooping his butthole off again after yet another gas-station burrito." suggested Joe Jack.

"Yeah, you ain't wrong." said Hank. "But he's never been *this* late to a meeting before. Whenever there's the slightest chance of making money, he usually jumps at it."

"I have an idea. Let's go search for him." suggested Joe Jack.

And so Hank and Joe Jack set out searching for Buck Strickland, looking all around the Strickland Propane offices. First, they checked the bathroom. Surprisingly, Buck was nowhere to be found, despite him composing most of his meetings in the bathroom due to eating way too many gas-station burritos.

"Buuuuuucck! Oh Buuuuuuck!" called out Joe Jack.

"Where are you Buck?!" called out Hank. "I swear to God, I sell propane and propane accessories! I'm not covering for your ass a second time."

The two men continued to search through the Strickland Propane offices, growing more and more concerned as each passing minute went by. Hank's frustration was mounting—he wasn't about to cover for Buck's laziness again. Finally, after checking every nook and cranny of the building, Hank gave one last frustrated shout.

"BUUUUCCK!" he yelled, louder this time, practically shaking the walls. "This isn't funny anymore, Buck! Where the hell are you?!"

The two men wandered through the office, calling out for Buck with no answer. The clinking of keys and muffled chatter echoed through the aisles. After checking the breakroom and even the storage room, it seemed like Buck had vanished completely.

"Maybe he's in the back office," Hank suggested, his frustration growing as the minutes ticked by.

They made their way to the small office at the far end of the building, the one where Buck usually holed up to take phone calls or complain about how much he hated working for a living. The door was slightly ajar, and inside, there was a faint smell of stale coffee and something else—a strange, earthy scent, like someone had been burning something odd.

Hank pushed the door open, revealing the office in complete disarray. Papers were scattered everywhere, a half-eaten burrito sat precariously on the desk, and Buck was nowhere to be found.

"Uh, Hank..." Joe Jack said, his voice a little too quiet for comfort. "This don't look right."

Hank stepped inside, scanning the room. "What do you mean? This looks like Buck's usual chaos."

Joe Jack pointed to a large map on the wall—a map of MisArlen and the surrounding areas, with red pins marking various locations. There was something else too—strange, glittering symbols drawn across the map in what looked like chalk. The same chalky residue that seemed to have left a faint trail leading out of the room.

Hank narrowed his eyes. "That's... that's weird. What the hell is going on here?"

"Look!" Joe Jack suddenly pointed at a piece of paper on the desk. "There's a note."

Hank picked up the note and read it aloud:

"To Whom It May Concern,
I've decided to take an early vacation. But don't worry, you'll still be making money. Meet me at the Fujiwara mansion if you want to find out what this is all about.

Buck"*

Hank furrowed his brow. "Fujiwara mansion? What does Buck want with the Fujiwaras?"

"I dunno, but I'm pretty sure we need to find out," Joe Jack said, scratching his head. "And I'd rather not be stuck in the middle of whatever weird witchcraft stuff is going on around here."

"Yeah," Hank muttered. "We're gonna need to sell some propane... and maybe some answers too."

Meanwhile, back at the Fujiwara mansion, Hazuki was still holed up in the corner of her room, listening to her parents' frantic arguing. The house was completely still, save for the faint sound of a distant engine roaring outside the mansion's gates.

As Hazuki sat in the corner of her room, she couldn't help but feel a strange sense of unease. Her parents were too busy arguing to notice her, and the quiet hum of the mansion seemed to be growing louder in her ears. Something felt wrong. The distant roar of an engine outside only added to her discomfort, like the start of a storm she couldn't yet see.

Suddenly, the loud creak of the front door interrupted the tense silence. Hazuki perked up, instinctively standing up and moving toward the window. She peered outside to see a black car pulling into the long driveway. Her heart sank. As the car came to a halt, Buck stepped out in his usual laid-back, confident manner. He looked up at the mansion with a smirk. He was already acting as if this was all a part of his plan. Buck walked towards the front door, but before he could even ring the bell, it had swung open.

"Mr. Strickland!" Akira's voice rang out, too eager to hide the desperation in his tone. "Thank you so much for coming on such short notice! We were in a terrible bind, and-"

"Yeah, yeah, no problem, buddy, I got this!" Buck interrupted smoothly, his grin widening as he sauntered inside. "I'm pretty good with kids, especially *wealthy* ones like your daughter."

Hazuki's stomach churned at his words. She wasn't just going to let him manipulate her family. No, if anyone was going to take control of this situation, it was going to be her — and Hank.

Meanwhile, Hank and Joe Jack were heading toward the Fujiwara mansion, their truck bouncing along the road as Hank gripped the steering wheel tightly, his mind racing.

"I don't like this one bit, Joe Jack," Hank muttered, his brows furrowed in frustration. "Buck's up to something, I just know it. Why would he head straight to the Fujiwara mansion after disappearing for hours?"

Joe Jack shrugged, his large frame nearly swallowing the passenger seat. "All I know is that weird stuff's been going down ever since that map showed up, and I ain't feelin' good about it, Hank."

Hank didn't answer. He was too focused, his thoughts shifting to Hazuki. The kid had a lot of magic in her, and he couldn't let Buck get anywhere near that, or her family's money. If there was any chance that Buck had figured out some way to steal from the Fujiwaras, Hank was going to put a stop to it.

The mansion came into view, its towering silhouette now almost ominous in the setting sun. Hank could see the black car parked out front.

"That's it," Hank muttered grimly. "That's Buck's car."

Joe Jack winced. "This is gonna be a mess, ain't it?"

"You bet it is," Hank replied, slamming the truck into park. "Let's get in there and make sure nothing happens to Hazuki. We need to get rid of Buck, fast."

Back in the living room, Buck was still making himself comfortable, lounging on the expensive couch like he owned the place. Akira and Reiko were sitting across from him, each of them looking more and more uneasy.

"I must say," Buck continued, "I'm glad to be helping out with the little one, but... I have to admit, this *is* a big house. Very *wealthy*. You must have quite a bit of cash flow, huh?"

Akira and Reiko exchanged nervous glances. Reiko spoke first. "Yes, well, we've been doing well... but Hazuki is the most important thing to us. We just need someone to keep an eye on her while we take care of some business. She can be... a handful."

"You don't say," Buck replied with a smirk. "I think I can handle a handful or two. I've got plenty of... experience with *difficult situations*."

Hazuki, now standing just outside the door to the living room, clenched her fists. She knew it was time to act.

When Akira and Reiko had left the house, Buck had continued to lounge in the Fujiwaras' living room, first stuffing his face with imported caviar without even asking. Next, he started traipsing all around the house, and raiding the Fujiwaras' jewellery cupboard, searching for priceless artifacts to stuff inside his trash bag that he got out from his car. Buck Strickland cackled to himself as he crammed another handful of stolen jewellery into his trash bag. "Aw hell, this is like Christmas mornin' back when my daddy still loved me," he muttered, stuffing a priceless gold-plated tea set between a fur coat and an imported bottle of bourbon.

As Buck rummaged through the Fujiwaras' belongings, Hazuki quietly slipped into the living room, her eyes narrowing with determination. She knew exactly what he was up to —and she wasn't about to let him get away with it. "Paipai Ponpoi Puwapuwa Puu!" chanted Hazuki. "Reduce the goods' value!"

Slowly, but surely, the newly-cast spell affected the goods, causing the gold-plated objects to rust, the caviar to go rotten, and the diamond necklaces to be converted into plastic replacements.

Buck paused mid-stuff, staring in disbelief as the once-pristine jewels turned into gaudy plastic trinkets and the caviar turned into a bubbling mess. His eyes widened, and his mouth fell agape as he turned to face Hazuki, who stood with her hands on her hips, a fierce glimmer in her eyes.

"What the hell just happened?!" Buck exclaimed, his bravado faltering. "You little brat! You think you can just mess with my score like that?"

Hazuki took a step forward, her heart pounding but her resolve unshaken. "You're not going to steal from my family, Buck Strickland! We may be rich, but that doesn't mean we'll let a thief take what's ours!"

Buck straightened up, trying to regain his composure. "Who do you think you are, kid? You think you can just wave your little wand and make me disappear? I've dealt with tougher than you, and I ain't afraid of no magic!"

Suddenly, the front door burst open, and Hank and Joe Jack stormed in, just in time to hear Buck's bluster. Hank's eyes landed on Buck, and he instantly understood what was happening. "Buck!" he yelled, marching toward the thief. "What in the hell do you think you're doing?"

"Uh, just babysitting, Hank!" Buck replied, but the panic was evident in his voice. "You know, keeping an eye on the little princess here!"

"Yeah, right," Hank shot back, glaring at Buck. "You're not babysitting; you're stealing! Get away from their daughter and put that stuff back!"

Hazuki looked up at Hank, relief washing over her at the sight of Hank. "Hank! He was stealing our things! I stopped him, but he—"

"Don't you dare listen to her!" Buck interrupted, throwing up his hands. "She's just a kid! What does she know about business? I was helping this family out, Hank! You know how much they need to make this month!"

"Helping? By robbing them blind?" Hank retorted, stepping closer. "You're fired, Buck! I don't want to see your face around here again!"

Buck's expression twisted into one of anger as he dropped the trash bag. "You can't just kick me out! I've got rights! I'll—"

"***GOD-DANG IT, BUCK! IF YOU DON'T DROP THIS ACT AT ONCE, I'LL NOT ONLY KICK YOUR FAT ASS, BUT I'LL ALSO RUN IT OVER WITH MY TRUCK!"***

"Paipai Ponpoi Puwapuwa Puu!" chanted Hazuki. "Make Hank's truck move!"

The spell hit Hank's truck, which proceeded to move on its own, directly towards Buck. But Buck saw it as an opportunity to escape, not knowing where it was really going. "So long, suckers!" he yelled gleefully, not knowing that it was really headed towards the MisArlen police station. Buck was trying to control it like he was at some sort of rodeo in the middle of the road. "YEEEEEHAAWW!" he yelled, completely oblivious to the predicament he was in. The truck was steering left and right without Buck's control, knocking cars, vans, and other trucks out of the way as if it was some sort of karate master. Suddenly, the truck's wheels started converting into actual arms and legs, and became an actual karate master, delivering karate chops and kicks to other vehicles on the road. The enchanted truck barreled through the streets of MisArlen, narrowly missing a fruit stand, sideswiping a taco cart, and sending a gang of local skateboard punks diving for cover. One kid threw his board at Buck's windshield. "YOU SUCK, OLD MAN!"

"WOOOOOBOY! RIDE 'EM COWBOY!" Buck hollered, gripping the steering wheel with white knuckles—uselessly, since the truck had a mind of its own. He barely had time to register the flashing red and blue lights in the distance before—

BAM!

Hank's truck plowed straight through the front sign of the **MisArlen Police Station**, sending debris flying as it came to an abrupt, magical halt right at the entrance. The doors swung open, ejecting Buck onto the pavement like a busted bag of flour.

Inside the station, Officer Murphy took a slow sip of his coffee, watching the spectacle unfold with deadpan indifference.

"Strickland," he sighed, putting down his cup. "You again."

Buck groaned from the ground. "Now hold on, boys, let's just think about this rationally —"

Two officers grabbed him and yanked him to his feet.

"You just crashed a stolen truck straight into a police station," Murphy said, cracking his knuckles. "That's a new one, even for you."

Buck forced out a shaky grin. "It ain't *technically* stolen if it drove itself, now is it?"

Murphy pulled out a pair of handcuffs. "Yeah? Well, technically, my boot is gonna drive itself up your ass if you don't shut up and get in the damn holding cell."

As Buck was hauled inside, he muttered under his breath, *"Goddang it, Hank..."*

Back at the Fujiwara Mansion

Hank dusted off his hands, watching the last bit of magical dust fade into the night air.

"Well, I'd say that's problem solved."

Joe Jack chuckled. "Hoo-wee! Ain't never seen a fat man ride a truck like that before. Looked like one of them demolition derbies, except a whole lot dumber."

Hazuki clapped her hands together with a triumphant smile. "I think that went well!"

Hank gave her an approving nod. "Good work, kid. You might not use propane, but I reckon you got a talent for keepin' things in order."

Joe Jack raised an eyebrow. "Uh, Hank? You do realize she just sent your truck to the police station *by itself*, right?"

Hank exhaled. "Yeah, and I don't even wanna think about how much paperwork I gotta fill out for that..."

Just then, Akira and Reiko returned home, their faces filled with exhaustion.

"Oh, Hazuki, sweetheart! We're back!" Reiko called. "I hope Mr. Strickland was good to you."

Hazuki, Hank, and Joe Jack exchanged glances.

"Uh, yeah," Hazuki said quickly. "He was... *something*, alright."

Hank straightened up. "Well, our work here is done. Time to get back to selling propane and propane accessories."

As Hank and Joe Jack made their way back to the truck-less parking lot, Hank sighed. "Damn it, I'm gonna have to walk back to Strickland Propane..."

Joe Jack smirked. "Aw, c'mon, Hank. Think of it as exercise."

Hank groaned. "If I wanted exercise, I'd be usin' charcoal."

TO BE CONTINUED...